DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 364 RC 019 371

AUTHOR Neihardt, John G.
TITLE Black Elk Speaks. Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-8032-8359-8
PUB DATE 72
NOTE 298p.; Originally published in 1932. Introduction by Vine Deloria, Jr.
AVAILABLE FROM University of Nebraska Press, 901 N. 17th St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0520 (paperback, $9.95--ISBN-0-8032-8359-8; cloth, $25--ISBN-0-8032-3301-9).
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Historical Materials (060) -- Creative Works (Literature,Drama,Fine Arts) (030)

EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS American Indian Culture; *American Indian History; American Indians; Beliefs; Biographies; Mythology; Nonformal Education; *Personal Narratives; *Philosophy; *Religion; Symbolism; United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Black Elk; *Oglala Sioux (Tribe); Visions; World Views

ABSTRACT

This classic book describes the life experiences and "great vision" of Black Elk, a holy man of the Oglala Sioux. Black Elk imparted these things to John Neihardt so that he might save them for future generations. Black Elk's power-vision occurred when he was 9 years old during a sickness. The lengthy vision contained profound symbolism that depicts the plight of American Indians and the unity of all creation. The memory of this vision affected Black Elk throughout his life, although he never felt he fulfilled the mission portrayed by the "six grandfathers." At age 17, on the advice of a medicine man, Black Elk performed the vision with the help of tribal members. The performance allowed him to use the powers given to him in the vision for healing others. Much of the book focuses on Black Elk's early years and upbringing and on the Indians' fight for their land. Included are accounts of the battle with Custer, the ghost dance, the killing of Crazy Horse, and the Wounded Knee massacre. Throughout the book are vivid descriptions of American Indian ceremonies, religious beliefs, and healing rites. Appendices include a letter written by John Neihardt to Black Elk, photographs of Neihardt and Black Elk, and a transcript of Black Elk's oral account of the origin of the peace pipe. (KS)

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